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SMALL HOUSEHOLDS

Their Composition
And Marketing Potential

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Their Composition and Marketing Potential

This is one of a series of marketing research reports prepared by the Newspaper Advertising Bureau, Inc., as a service to the newspaper business and its advertisers.

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HIGHLIGHTS

Census data and special tabulations for adults 18 to 64, from Simmons Market Research Bureau's 1986 Study of Media & Markets indicate that:

- Only a minority of adults in this age group live in one-person (8%) or two-person (27%) households. However, these two household sizes account for more than 50 million individuals under the age of 65.

- People living in small households do not represent a distinctive market segment in the usual sense, partly because they include both sexes and a range of ages, and also because residence in a small household may be temporary rather than permanent.

- People in one-person households are above average on several measures of socio-economic status, including college degrees and professional employment. The data for women living alone suggest that those under age 35 have greater employment opportunities, a career orientation and higher expectations than women 35 to 64 years old. Women under 35 appear to live somewhat "better" than their median household income would indicate. Younger and older men who live alone show comparatively minor differences on socio-economic measures.

- Among those who are 35 to 64 years old, 64% of the men and 79% of the women who live alone are separated, divorced or widowed. Some people in this group may be under considerable strain, because the break-up of a marriage or the death of a spouse is a major life crisis that can disrupt personal adjustment and customary living patterns.

- The median age for men in one-person households is ten years below the comparable statistic for women (33.9 years vs 43.7 years). This reflects the fact that men 35 to 64 years old are more likely than women in this age group to marry or remarry.

- Since adults living alone don't have to adapt to the wishes of other household members, they may be highly individualized in their leisure activities and spending patterns. This would be particularly true for the high proportion who live in central cities, where anonymity can be the rule.

- In one-person households, financial difficulties are most common among women 35 to 64. The median income of this group is only $14,025, and 37% have incomes under $10,000. Men 35 to 64 living alone have the highest per capita income of any of the small household types analyzed, but there are several hints that they tend to live "beneath their station". This may reflect personal or financial problems associated with separation or divorce.

- Married couples living in two-person households are very similar to the total adult population age 18 to 64. This group has the highest median age (49.6 years), the highest median household income and the highest level of home ownership. Many probably live in "empty nest" households.

- Adults 18 to 64 living in "other" types of two-person households are difficult to characterize because they represent so many different kinds of family and non-family relationships. On the whole, this group tends to have somewhat lower socio-economic status than others in small households.

- The newspaper reading habits of people living in small households may be influenced by other demographic factors, such as age, as well as by size of household. Among those over 35, the weekday and Sunday readership figures show parallel variations, with the level of both weekday and Sunday reading being lowest for men living alone and highest for married couples. Among those under 35 years old, daily newspaper readership is variable, but Sunday readership is quite constant.

- With their high per-capita median income, small households represent important markets for many products and services. For example, women under 35 years old who live alone are good prospects for high fashion and travel advertisers. Married couples with no children at home are likely to have large disposable incomes that make them attractive to a broad spectrum of marketers.

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INTRODUCTION

Why Small Households Are Important

Census Bureau estimates indicate that between 1970 and 1985, the number of households in the United States grew by 36.9%. During the same fifteen-year period, the number of people living in households increased by only 17.3% (Table 1).

Table 1

U.S. Population and Number of Households: 1970-1985

	1970	1975	1980	1985
Total households	63,401	71,120	80,776	86,789
Population in hhs	199,030	209,008	222,540	233,516

Source: Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 411, March 1985, Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. (All figures are in 000s.)

The Census Bureau figures shown in Table 1 show a strong trend toward smaller households and a drop in the average number of residents per household from 3.14 in 1970 to 2.69 in 1985. In just fifteen years, the number of two-person households grew by 49.4% while the number of single-person households virtually doubled, showing a growth rate of 89.9% (Table 2). At the same time, the number of households containing five or more persons decreased by 26.9%. Single-person and two-person households now account for more than half (55.3%) of all households.

Table 2

Household Size and Average Population per Household: 1970-1985

	1970	1985	% Change
One person household	10,851	20,602	+ 89.9
Two person household	18,333	27,389	+ 49.4
Three-four person hh.	20,940	29,096	+ 38.9
Five or more person hh.	13,277	9,703	- 26.9
Average pop. per hh.	3.14	2.69	- 14.3

Source: Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 411, March 1985, Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. (All figures in 000s, except average population per household.)

The forces behind the trend to smaller households have been widely discussed by social scientists. Among the factors mentioned are later marriage, high divorce rates, increased longevity, more effective birth control methods, and an increased tendency to remain single.

Data from Simmons Market Research Bureau indicate that adults between the ages of 18 and 64 are more than four times as likely as people of retirement age to live in larger households (those consisting of three or more persons). Conversely, those who are 65 or older are four times as likely to live alone (Table 3). People 65 and older account for only 15.7% of all adults but represent 42% of the one-person households and 27% of the adults in two-person households. Among those over 65 who live alone, the ratio of women to men is almost four to one (6.8 million vs. 1.8 million), mainly because of the male/female difference in life expectancy.

Table 3

Percent of Adults Living in Households of Various Sizes
(by age)

Number in Household	Total Adults	18-64 Years	65 or Older
One person	11.9%	8.2%	31.9%
Two persons	31.1	27.0	53.0
Three or more persons	57.0	64.8	15.1
Adult population (in 000s)	(171,205)	(144,257)	(26,948)

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets.

The trend to smaller households may not be permanent; future economic and social conditions may once again produce an increase in average household size. In fact, SMRB estimates suggest that the percentage of adults currently living in households with three or more persons may be somewhat higher than it was six years ago. The differences between the 1980 and 1986 figures are quite small, but they are consistent across age groups (Table 4).

Table 4

Percent of Adults Living in Households of Various Sizes: 1980-1986

Number in Household	18-64 years		65 or older	
	1980	1986	1980	1986
One person	8.3%	8.2%	31.2%	31.9%
Two persons	28.9	27.0	56.8	53.0
Three or more persons	62.8	64.8	12.0	15.1

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau,
1980/1986 Study of Media & Markets

Whatever the future brings, single-person and two-person households now represent more than half (55.3%) of all households in the United States. This makes it essential for marketers and media to understand what the people living in these small households are like, as well as how they spend their time and money.

How the Analysis Was Conducted

A great deal has been written about "senior citizens" who live alone. On the other hand, relatively little attention has been devoted to the characteristics, leisure activities, and media usage of adults under age 65 who live alone or in two-person households. Accordingly, the data base for this analysis was limited to adults between the ages of 18 and 64.

The data analyzed are derived from a special tabulation of data from the 1986 Study of Media & Markets, by Simmons Market Research Bureau. In order to develop finer discriminations and thereby arrive at a more detailed picture of adults age 18 to 64 living in small households, the following analytic groupings were specified:

One-person household	Two-person household:
Men, 18 - 34	Married, 18 - 34
Men, 35 - 64	Married, 35 - 64
Women, 18 - 34	Other than married, 18 - 34
Women, 35 - 64	Other than married, 35 - 64

The SMRB data analyzed are based on surveys of adults, not households. This may produce some confusion in the case of two-person households. For example, in two-person households where the respondent is between 18 and 64 years of age, the second household member might have been a child or someone 65 or older.

SMRB estimates are based on a total sample of more than 19,000 adults. Nevertheless, detailed cross-tabulations can sometimes result in bases that are quite small. The report attempts to minimize the problem of small bases by focusing on activities and buying patterns that involve at least 10% of all adults, even though this means that some intriguing possibilities are left unexplored.

Analyses based on cross-tabulations of syndicated research data can seldom address the kinds of issues that can be tackled through custom surveys. In a few cases, it may be possible to draw inferences about attitudes and motivations from media usage patterns, leisure activities or reported buying, but conclusions based on such data remain speculative.

This report focuses mainly on descriptive background and broader issues: How many adults live in one-person and two-person households? Can the people in small households be thought of as a single market? How do they differ from the general population in demographics, media usage and buying patterns?

Charles Lehman of NAB's Research Department analyzed the data and wrote the report.

I. WORKING AGE ADULTS: WHO ARE THEY?

How Many Live in Small Households?

This report focuses on adults 18 to 64 years old in small households, but it should be pointed out that a majority of this age group (64.8%) lives in larger households having three or more members (Table 5).

Almost 12 million (8% of adults under 65) live alone. These single-person households are evenly split between men and women, but more men who live alone are under 35, whereas more of the women are over 35. Median ages are 33.9 years for the men and 43.7 years for the women (not shown in table).

More than one in four adults of working age (27%) live in two-person households, and nearly two-thirds of these are married-couple households. The median age of respondents in married-couple households is 49.6 years, so a large proportion of these households are "empty nests" with adult children living elsewhere.

Respondents living in all other types of two-person households are much younger, having a median age of only 32.0 years. More than 13 million Americans of working age live in these "other" two-person households. About one-fourth (26%) of the women householders live with a child under 18 years of age, but only 4% of the male householders share their quarters with a child (not shown in table).

Table 5

Distribution of Adults 18-64,
by Size and Type of Household

	Number (in 000s)	Percent
Total adults, 18-64 years	144,257	100.0%
One-person household	11,834	8.2%
Male, 18-34	3,183	2.2
Male, 35-64	2,713	1.9
Female, 18-34	2,286	1.6
Female, 35-64	3,652	2.5
Two-person household	38,953	27.0%
Married, 18-34	7,176	5.0
Married, 35-64	18,262	12.6
All other, 18-34	8,022	5.6
All other, 35-64	5,493	3.8
Three or more persons in household	93,470	64.8%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau,
1986 Study of Media & Markets

Splitsville, USA

Obviously, most people who live alone are single, separated, divorced or widowed (Table 6). (However, about 2% of all adults in one-person households report that they are married.) Among those under age 35, single men and women predominate; among those age 35 to 64, the majority were formerly married.

Table 6

Percentage Who Are Single, Separated, Divorced or Widowed

	18-34 Years		35-64 Years	
	Single	SDW[a]	Single	SDW[a]
One-person household, male	76%	22%	33%	64%
One-person household, female	84	15	18	79
Two-person household, married	-	-	-	-
Two-person household, all other	78	21	26	71
Total men[b]	52%	8%	7%	12%
Total women[b]	38%	10%	5%	24%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets.

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a) Separated, divorced or widowed.

b) In this table and all similar tables, "total" refers to all adults of the specified age group and sex, without regard to household size.

Where Do They Live?

People who live alone or in two-person households are more likely than other adults to be central city residents, with the exception of married couples living together (Table 7). About half of the adults under age 35 who live alone are found in central cities, as compared with only 34% of their age group overall.

The incidence of central city residency in two-person, married-couple households is almost identical to that found among the total population. Perhaps this is because central city residency tends to decline with age, and adults in two-person, married-couple households have the highest median age of any of the small-household groups analyzed.

Table 7

Percentage of Adults 18-64 Who Are Central City Residents

	18-34 Years	35-64 Years
One-person household, male	50%	39%
One-person household, female	52	38
Two-person household, married	33	26
Two-person household, all other	40	35
Total men	33%	27%
Total women	34%	27%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets

They Are Well Educated, Especially the Younger Ones

The percentage of college graduates is higher among people who live alone than in the total adult population. For women under age 35, the difference is almost two to one in favor of those who live alone (Table 8). Changing career expectations and brighter employment prospects for women may help explain the high ratio of college graduates in the 18 to 34 year old group.

This sharp increase in educational attainment is not found among younger men in single-person households, but men over 35 are more likely to be college graduates than are women in the same age group. Regardless of age, men who live alone are better-educated than the total male population.

For two-person households, the picture is different: Under age 35, the ratio of college graduates in married-couple households is clearly above average, but this is not true of those over age 35 living in this type of household. The lower ratio of college graduates among those age 35 or older may reflect the special character of "empty nest" families and the fact that this group tends to be the oldest of those analyzed.

Among small households, the two-person, "all other" group has the lowest percentage of college graduates, but even so, their educational level compares favorably with the total population.

Table 8

Percentage of College Graduates Among Adults 18-64

	18-34 Years	35-64 Years
One-person household, male	29%	28%
One-person household, female	33	20
Two-person household, married	27	17
Two-person household, all other	20	17
Total men	19%	24%
Total women	17%	15%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets

Most of Them Work Full-Time

In the total population 18 to 64 years of age the percentage of full-time workers is much higher among men than among women, both for those who are 18 to 34 years old and those age 35 or older. (Table 9).

The full-time employment picture is quite different for people living in small households. The proportion of those under 35 who work full-time is much higher than the percent found in the total 18-34 year age group. 84% of the younger women who live alone are employed full-time, compared with 53% of their age group overall (Table 9).

Table 9

Percentage Employed Full-Time Among Adults 18-64

	18-34 Years	35-64 Years
One-person household, male	78%	69%
One-person household, female	84	55
Two-person household, married	83	55
Two-person household, all other	69	61
Total men	73%	78%
Total women	53%	49%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets

Table 9 suggests a disturbing question that cannot be answered by syndicated data: Do people living alone who happen to be over age 35 have less financial need for jobs than younger people in the same types of households? Or are some in the 35-64 year age group displaced persons in a rapidly shifting employment picture?[1] Changing markets, foreign competition, automation and advances in technology have eliminated jobs that provided lifetime employment for earlier generations, and older workers may have found it difficult to adapt to the breakneck pace of these changes.

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1) According to the June 8, 1987 issue of Fortune, the median age of American workers has fallen from 39.2 in 1970 to 35.5 today. (See "Seniority Under Siege", p.10)

A High Proportion of Younger Adults Have High-Status Occupations

The proportion of professionals and managers is higher in one-person households than in their total sex and age groups, with the exception of men 35 to 64 (Table 10) Women under 35 who live alone are more than twice as likely to have a high-status occupation as the typical woman in this age group.

Among adults under age 35 living alone, more women than men report that they work as professionals or managers. Among those over age 35, the reverse is true. In either case, it is important to remember that this is a very broad occupational category, and that the terms "professionals" and "managers" connote different types of employment for men and women.

Table 10

Percentage of Professionals and Managers Among Adults 18-64

	18-34 Years	35-64 Years
One-person household, male	25%	24%
One-person household, female	31	20
Two-person household, married	24	18
Two-person household, all other	15	21
Total men	15%	27%
Total women	14%	16%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets

Per-Capita Income Is Above Average in Small Households

The question of whether two can live as cheaply as one may be very relevant for people in small households. Of the small household types analyzed, two-person households consisting of a married couple have the highest median income, but men living alone and women under age 35 who live alone have higher per-capita incomes (Table 11).

In one-person households, the median income for women under age 35 is 88% of the median for men in that age group. Among those 35 to 64, the women's median income is only 67% of the men's. This may be another indication of improving employment prospects for younger women.

Table 11

Median Household Income of Adults 18-64

	18-34 Years	35-64 Years
One-person household, male	$18,500	$21,000
One-person household, female	16,300	14,025
Two-person household, married	29,375	28,125
Two-person household, all other	22,150	21,510
Total men	$27,675	$31,425
Total women	$25,525	$28,350

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets

--But Medians Don't Tell The Whole Story on Incomes

While median income figures are useful, they can conceal important differences among groups. For example, Table 11 provides no information on the extent to which adults living in the various types of small households may be economically disadvantaged.

Table 12, which shows the percentage with household incomes under $10,000, suggests that serious financial problems may be common among women ages 35 to 64 who live alone, and also in two-person households that do not consist of married couples. Conversely, married couples in two-person households are less likely than adults in general to fall into this low income bracket.

Table 12

Percentage of Adults With Household Incomes Under $10,000

	18-34 Years	35-64 Years
One-person household, male	20%	23%
One-person household, female	23	37
Two-person household, married	6	9
Two-person household, all other	18	23
Total men	10%	10%
Total women	15%	12%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets

Their Racial Make-up Mirrors the Population--Almost

On the whole, the racial composition of adults in small households resembles that of the total population, with two exceptions. The most notable difference is that blacks are underrepresented in two-person households consisting of a married couple (Table 13). The second exception is that the percentage of blacks among those over age 35 may be slightly higher in the three other types of small households than in the total population.

In the total population, the median age of blacks is lower than the median age of whites because of differences in birth rates and longevity (not shown in table).

Table 13

Racial Composition of Adults in Small Households

	18-34 Years		35-64 Years	
	White	Black	White	Black
One-person household, male	84%	13%	83%	14%
One-person household, female	85	12	85	13
Two-person household, married	92	6	93	7
Two-person household, all other	85	13	83	15
Total men	85%	12%	89%	9%
Total women	83%	14%	88%	10%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets

How Many Are Home Owners?

As would be expected, the level of home ownership among people who live in small households is generally below average. The exception is two-person, married-couple households, many of which can more accurately be described as "formerly large" households (Table 14).

Among those who are over age 35, home ownership is more prevalent, but older men living alone are least likely to own their homes. This may reflect the high proportion of the separated and divorced in this group (See Table 6) and possibly, the terms of their divorce settlements.

Table 14

Percentage of Adults 18-64 Who Own Their Homes

	18-34 Years	35-64 Years
One-person household, male	25%	46%
One-person household, female	16	59
Two-person household, married	53	86
Two-person household, all other	31	62
Total men	57%	79%
Total women	52%	80%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets

How About Their Voting Record?

Does living in small households tend to isolate people from the wider society? Reported voting behavior over the past twelve months returns a mixed verdict on this question (Table 15). For those under age 35, three of the four small household types are above the norm for their age group. However, among those 35 to 64 years old, three of the four small household types are below the norm.

Overall, reported voting is significantly higher among those 35 to 64 than among younger adults. However, few age differences are found among men and women who live alone. If anything, the level of voting may be lower among such residents over age 35.

Table 15

Percentage Who Voted in Past Twelve Months
(Federal, state or local election)

	18-34 Years	35-64 Years
One-person household, male	34%	31%
One-person household, female	37	36
Two-person household, married	35	44
Two-person household, all other	28	33
Total men	31%	42%
Total women	30%	41%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets

Some Implications of Living in Small Households

Living in a small household is not a lifelong condition. Some of the younger adults now living alone will marry, while those already married may have children. Among older adults, some who are now separated, divorced or widowed may remarry. However, as some now living in small households become members of larger households, other Americans will be making the opposite transition. On the whole, the trend in the proportion of adults ages 18 to 64 living in one- or two-person households has changed very slowly over time. A different mix of individuals will be found in small households, but the demographic segments represented can be expected to remain fairly constant over the near term.

Do people live in small households by choice or because they feel they have no other options? This important question cannot be answered simply on the basis of demographic trends. Overall, from the data shown in this chapter one can infer that younger adults are more likely than older adults to live in small households by choice.

One- and two-person households represent several distinct segments. Among women living alone, many differences exist between the younger and older groups. The younger women have higher incomes and are more likely to be college graduates. Their exceptionally high level of full-time employment may reflect a newly won conception of themselves as career women rather than as marginal or part-time workers.

On the other hand, women ages 35 to 64 who live alone have the lowest median income of any of the four single-person household types analyzed, as well as the lowest level of full-time employment. Four out of five are separated, divorced or widowed.

These thumbnail descriptions suggest that among women living alone, the 18 to 34 year olds are prime prospects for designer clothes, foreign travel and other upscale products and services. However, older women who live alone are almost four times as likely to own their homes, so their median disposable income may be higher than the median household income would indicate. Even so, typical spending patterns for younger and older women living alone are very different.

The differences between younger and older men living alone are less striking. Younger men are more likely to be central city residents; the older men have a higher median income and a higher incidence of separation and divorce. The two age groups have similar proportions of college graduates, as well as of professionals and managers. Overall, these data suggest that younger and older men living alone may show fewer differences in spending patterns than their female counterparts do.

Why should the patterns found among younger and older women in single-person households be so unlike the patterns found for men who live alone? The most fundamental reason would appear to be that the conditions

of female employment, and consequently, women's expectations, have changed more dramatically in recent years. One measure of this change is the striking difference in the percentage of college graduates among younger (33%) and older (20%) women living alone.

Two-person households occupied by a married couple appear to be very much in the mainstream of American life. More than 25 million people live in this type of household, and they have the highest median household income (but not the highest per capita income) of any of the small household groups analyzed.

The percentage of homeowners among married-couple households is significantly higher than for the other small household groups. This might imply a more stable household with closer ties to the surrounding community. It also underscores the fact that two-person, married-couple households are prime prospects for home furnishings and all kinds of home maintenance products.

The nature of "other" two-person households is more elusive, mainly because there are so many possible combinations: mother and child; father and child; POSSLQ (persons of the opposite sex sharing living quarters); related adults of the same sex; and unrelated adults of the same sex. The implications for consumer behavior are too varied to permit any easy generalization.

II. MEDIA USAGE, LEISURE AND CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

Daily Newspaper Readership

Daily newspaper readership varies with both age and sex. Overall, weekday coverage is higher among adults 35 to 64 than for younger adults, and somewhat higher for men than for women (Table 16).

Weekday coverage for men living alone is 58%, regardless of age--about average for men under 35, but far below the average for men 35 to 64. Average weekday readership for women who live alone increases beyond age 35, but not to the extent seen in the total female population.

Table 16

Daily Newspaper Readership
(Average Weekday Coverage)

	18-34 Years	35-64 Years
One-person household, male	58%	58%
One-person household, female	57	64
Two-person household, married	53	72
Two-person household, all other	53	63
Total men	59%	70%
Total women	52%	68%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets

Regardless of marital status, younger adults in two-person households show a lower level of daily reading than younger adults who live alone (Table 16). This is an unexpected finding, because daily readership overall shows the reverse pattern. For example, on an average weekday, the newspaper reaches 65% of all adults living in two-person households, but only 59% of those living alone (not shown in table).

The data at hand shed little light on why daily newspaper readership should be so low among young adults living in two-person households, but the question is important because more than 15 million people live in this kind of household. (See Table 5.)

Reading Over Five Weekdays

Over five weekdays the daily newspaper reaches about eight out of ten working-age Americans living in small households (Table 17). The fairly large difference in coverage for one weekday and five weekdays reflects an above average turnover rate from day to day. In other words, the great majority of the small household population read daily newspapers, but they may not read every weekday.

Table 17

Daily Newspaper Coverage Over Five Weekdays

	18-34 Years	35-64 Years
One-person household, male	82%	76%
One-person household, female	81	81
Two-person household, married	76	85
Two-person household, all other	80	81
Total men	82%	87%
Total women	79%	84%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets

How About Sunday Readership?

Average Sunday coverage of the newspaper in small households reveals a very different picture than weekday reading. Among adults under 35, the level of readership shows little variation, regardless of sex, marital status or household size (Table 18). Furthermore, for single-issue coverage the Sunday figure is consistently higher than the weekday figure among these younger adults (See Table 16). This indicates that for this generation, the Sunday reading habit is more firmly entrenched than weekday reading is.

Table 18

Sunday Newspaper Coverage
(Average Weekend)

	18-34 Years	35-64 Years
One-person household, male	61%	55%
One-person household, female	61	65
Two-person household, married	62	71
Two-person household, all other	60	60
Total men	62%	67%
Total women	60%	68%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets

The Sunday and weekday reading patterns of older adults in small households are more consistent than those found for younger people: Among adults who are 35 to 64 years old, the level of reading, on both weekday and Sunday, is lowest for men living alone and highest for married adults in two-person households. In contrast to those under 35, older adults appear to have an equal or slightly greater commitment to weekday editions than to the Sunday newspaper (Compare Tables 16 and 18).

Paperback Book Purchases

Simmons does not ask respondents about book reading, but does collect information on both hard cover and paperback book purchases. Paperback buying may be more closely related to personal interest in reading, since paperbacks are less likely to be purchased as gifts or textbooks.

To the extent that these purchases reflect actual use, the data indicate that reading is more common among younger adults in small households than among other adults 18 to 34 years old (Table 19). On the other hand, adults 35 to 64 in small households (especially women) may be somewhat less likely than others in their age group to be book readers.

Table 19

Paperback Book Purchases in Last Twelve Months

	18-34 Years	35-64 Years
One-person household, male	38%	31%
One-person household, female	50	35
Two-person household, married	40	33
Two-person household, all other	38	37
Total men	33%	32%
Total women	43%	41%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets

Television Viewing

In one-person households, the men tend to watch more TV than others in their age group, while the women tend to watch less (Table 20). The differences are especially notable for women under 35, who average roughly 18 hours a week, and men 35 to 64, who average about 26 hours.

Whether they live in large or small households, adults 35 to 64 report more hours of viewing than younger adults do. This suggests that older adults are more likely to spend evenings at home. Also, the lower proportion of full-time workers in this age group allows more time for TV viewing. (See Table 9.)

Table 20

Average Weekly Hours of TV Viewing

	18-34 Years (hrs)	35-64 Years (hrs)
One-person household, male	21.7	25.9
One-person household, female	18.1	24.3
Two-person household, married	19.1	25.7
Two-person household, all other	21.0	23.6
Total men	20.4	22.4
Total women	23.2	25.7

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets

Theater Going

In most types of small households, live theater attendance is more common than it is among the general populations used as benchmarks (Table 21). Women living alone are most likely to be theater goers; more than one out of five have attended live performances within the past year. To some extent, the above-average incidence of theater-going among people who live in small households reflects the high percentage of central city residents in this group. (See Table 7.)

Table 21

Percentage Reporting Live Theater Attendance
(in last twelve months)

	18-34 Years	35-64 Years
One-person household, male	16%	14%
One-person household, female	22	21
Two-person household, married	14	16
Two-person household, all other	17	16
Total men	11%	12%
Total women	12%	16%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets

Moviegoing

For both small-household residents and the general population, moviegoing is a more widespread activity than theater going, and age appears to be more influential than household size where moviegoing is concerned. Regardless of household size, moviegoing is much more common among adults under 35 than among older adults. Reported movie attendance in the last 90 days tends to be average or above average for adults in small households; a major exception is two-person households consisting of a married couple (Table 22), who went far less often.

Table 22

Percentage Reporting Moviegoing
(in last 90 days)

	18-34 Years	35-64 Years
One-person household, male	44%	31%
One-person household, female	55	31
Two-person household, married	39	21
Two-person household, all other	51	29
Total men	42%	28%
Total women	45%	30%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets

Foreign Travel

In the population at large, adults over age 35 are somewhat more likely to travel abroad than younger adults are (Table 23), whereas the reverse pattern tends to apply in small households. The highest percentage reporting foreign travel within the last three years is found among young women living alone and in two-person households consisting of young married couples.

Women living alone have smaller median incomes than men living alone (Table 11), but are more likely to travel abroad. This suggests that men and women who do not have the wishes of other household members to consider tend to spend their disposable income in different ways. In other words, more women than men find personal rewards in foreign travel.

Table 23

Reported Foreign Travel in Last Three Years

	18-34 Years	35-64 Years
One-person household, male	15%	13%
One-person household, female	20	17
Two-person household, married	20	19
Two-person household, all other	15	15
Total men	15%	18%
Total women	14%	17%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets

Credit Card Ownership

Statistics on reported ownership of one or more credit cards show the same pattern found in a number of other tables in this report. That is, the figures for young women living alone and for married couples in two-person households are above the benchmark averages, while the figures for older men living alone and for "other" two-person households are below the averages (Table 24).

It might be argued that many of these data on consumption reflect the respondent's perception of his or her disposable income as much as any objective measure of income. If so, young women living alone and married couples in two-person households appear to feel more prosperous than other people in small households.

Table 24

Percentage Owning One or More Credit Cards

	18-34 Years	35-64 Years
One-person household, male	52%	55%
One-person household, female	63	61
Two-person household, married	67	69
Two-person household, all other	51	56
Total men	51%	65%
Total women	55%	66%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets

Investments

Reported ownership of securities indicates that adults in small households generally follow the same kinds of investment strategies as the population at large (Table 25). Among adults who live alone, the percentage owning securities is slightly above average for those under 35 and below average for those who are 35 or older. Adults in two-person, married-couple households report the highest level of security ownership, while those in "other" types of two-person households show the lowest level.

Simmons figures on savings accounts and ownership of IRAs reveal a similar pattern (not shown in table).

Table 25

Percentage Reporting Ownership of Any Type Securities

	18-34 Years	35-64 Years
One-person household, male	24%	30%
One-person household, female	25	26
Two-person household, married	31	35
Two-person household, all other	19	25
Total men	22%	34%
Total women	22%	30%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets

Alcoholic Beverages: Distilled Liquor

For the most part, reported consumption of distilled liquor, including gin, whiskey and vodka, is average or slightly above average among people in small households, as compared with the benchmark measures (Table 26). Women 35 or older who live alone are a notable exception; the proportion of this segment who drink distilled liquor is seven percentage points below the average for their age and sex.

Wine drinking patterns are similar, but on the whole, wine is somewhat more popular than distilled liquor among women, while the reverse is true for men (not shown in table).

Table 26

Percentage Drinking Any Distilled Liquor

	18-34 Years	35-64 Years
One-person household, male	61%	61%
One-person household, female	65	42
Two-person household, married	58	49
Two-person household, all other	62	48
Total men	57%	55%
Total women	56%	49%

Source: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1986 Study of Media & Markets

Implications of Chapter II

Even without a custom survey, syndicated research data on purchases, media usage and leisure activities can shed light on the nature of the small-household population under age 65. At the outset, it should be noted that differences among the eight types of small households analyzed can be more extreme than the difference between a given type of small household and the general population. In other words, it may be a mistake to think of adults in either one-person or two-person households as a single clearly defined market segment.

The available data cannot tell us how an individual feels about living in a small household, but it is possible to hazard some educated guesses that are consistent with the data. Here are some tentative conclusions about major factors that should be taken into account in order to understand the subsets within the small-household population:

One-person households, generational and life-stage differences

It is reasonable to assume that, for most individuals, living alone represents a mixture of advantages and disadvantages . On the plus side, a major advantage might be freedom--the ability to do whatever one pleases without taking into account the wishes of other people. A major disadvantage might be loneliness--a feeling that one's relations with others are mostly superficial, that one has been abandoned by the people who really count, or perhaps even a sense of personal failure and unworthiness.

Men and women under 35 might be expected to put more emphasis on the positive aspects of living alone than older adults do, because many younger people have only recently escaped from parental controls. Also, younger adults may find it easier to form new attachments and to locate potential marriage partners.

Conversely, those who are 35 or older may be more vulnerable to the negatives of solitary living, especially since a large proportion have undergone separation, divorce or widowhood--experiences that amount to major life crises.

One-person households, sex differences

Solitary living can be expected to produce idiosyncratic spending patterns that accentuate sex differences. For example, men who live alone probably spend a larger portion of their income than men in larger households do on "typically" male interests.

Whether people have mostly positive or mostly negative feelings about living alone, men or women in one-person households enjoy considerable freedom from the wishes and demands of others. Therefore, living by oneself for an extended period of time might make one less conforming or more eccentric.

In the absence of the approval or disapproval of others, people living alone can be expected to follow their own predispositions. Those who are "naturally" extravagant may live far beyond their means, while those who tend to be frugal watch every penny.

Two-person households, married couples

Married couples in two-person households tend to be somewhat higher in socio-economic status than their total age cohort, but they are very much a part of the American mainstream. In fact, this group serves as a reminder that it is often more accurate to think of small households as a life-stage rather than a permanent condition. Many married couples live in two-person households only because they have not yet had children or because they have grown children who now have households of their own.

All other two-person households

In the aggregate, all other types of two-person households tend to be somewhat lower in socio-economic status than either men or women living alone, or married couples with no children at home. However, making generalizations about "other" two-person households would be misleading because this catch-all category includes so many kinds of combinations.

Newspaper readership in small households

In comparison to age and socio-economic class, living in a small household probably has relatively little influence on newspaper readership. This is especially true of Sunday newspaper readership among young adults.

Among adults over 35, living in a one- or two-person household (other than one consisting of a married couple) may appear to result in lower newspaper readership, but household size is probably less influential than other factors, such as the trauma of separation, divorce, widowhood or greater social isolation.

The most unexpected finding on daily newspaper readership involves adults under 35: In this group, average weekday coverage is lower in two-person households than in one-person households, a reversal of the pattern found in the total population. The reasons for this are unclear, but two-person, married couple households are also below average in TV viewing and moviegoing. Their more intense lifestyles and mobility rates may militate against stable levels of media use.